

THE
CONDUCT⁽¹²⁾
OF THE
DISSENTERS
CONSIDERED.

PART the Second.

CONTAINING,

An Account of their Proceedings
since the Breach at *Exeter*. II. Answers
to their chief Arguments for Subscribing
Articles of Faith, &c. III. A Defence of
the *Non-Subscribers*. IV. A Charge of
Popery upon the Principles of Mr. *Cum-
ming*, &c.

Cacoethes Credendi, Scabies Ecclesiae.

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SOME former Observations, under this Title, were addressed to the Lord Bishop of *Bangor*; for Reasons therein given: But many Circumstances in the late Disturbances amongst these People, have carried the Dispute so far from those Views wherein it was before considered, as not to justify any further Appeal to his Lordship. The *Dissenters* have now openly disavowed his Lordship's generous, and truly christian Principles of *Liberty*, which were at first

taken to be promoted in Favour of them; and they are now in eager pursuit of such Schemes, and such a Discipline in Religion, as his Lordship has fully proved to belong not to the true Spirit and *Genius* of Religion, but to the Contrivances only of ambitious, rash, and fallible Men.

THE only Objection, I have yet met with to the foregoing Account, has been, That the Charge is too general, many of the *Dissenters* entirely coming into his Lordships Plan of Liberty, and generously practicing it towards one another. This Exception is well grounded, my Pleasure in being so Convinced, vastly exceeds the little Mortification of seeing a Mistake; and I doubt not but to do justice on this account, in the following Relation.

IT was before taken Notice, in many Instances, of the narrow Principles of the *Dissenters*, and the meanness of their Conceptions in Matters of a religious Nature; and some Particulars were then remarked, wherein their untoward Tempers, had done a great deal of Mischief, and again threatened the publick Quiet of the Nation. The Consequence of those Persecutions then observed in the Infancy amongst them, have sufficiently justified the Censures thereupon.

on. When this *Cacæthes*, this *Scabies Credendi*, this Phrenzy of Orthodoxy first discovered it self, and prompted Mr. Bragg, with several others, upon an Inquisition into their Peoples Faith, it was, perhaps, imagined, things would not have gone to such Extremities as they have done since; but those who will thus argue, must have been but little acquainted with *Spiritual Prosecutions*, and the danger from a Priesthood, of any Persuasion, when hot with Zeal, Pride, Revenge, and Ignorance. The whole Kingdom is now in a Gaze at this *Enthusiastick War*; and the lovers of their Country, are in Pain to know where it will end.

THE holy Embers which lay glowing at *Exeter*, and some other Parts of the Country, are blown up into a terrible Flame at *London*; The Fire of Orthodoxy rages amongst these People to such a height, as calls again upon the civil Power to guard against its Mischiefs; for no Government, or Community can be safe, where such a Spirit can be armed with Power. It has broke out in open outrage upon all the usual Regards of Society, and good Manners; insomuch that when a Place of publick Assembly could not put Bounds any longer

longer to their Violences and Clamours, do the *Coffee-Houses*, and Places of Resort, ring with their Quarrels, and the *Press* daily Teems with *Libels*, full of Bitternells, Malice, and personal Slander. Particular Constructions and Interpretations of fallible Men, are now, by these People, obtruded as more significant and expressive than the inspired Text; their own Conceits and Inventions are made necessary Supplements to the Teachings of the Holy Spirit, and the very Foundations, the Essentials of Religion, are transferred from the *Bible* to their *Catechisms*, *Confessions*, &c. As soon as they are made easy, in worshipping God according to their own Consciences, are they inventing *new Articles*, *new Faiths*, and *new Tests*, to burthen, shackle, and persecute one another with; and the Artillery of *Rome*, in her spiritual Inquisitions, are they playing against themselves, with a Fury equal to the oldest Stagers in *Censures*, *Excommunications*, *Halters*, *Faggots*, *Racks*, *Gibbets*, and other elegant Methods of *Conviction* by *Torture*. Happy it is for the Nation, that they are yet but a tollerated People!

TO support these Suggestions, let us now take a Survey of the *Conduct* of these

these People, since the Breach at *Exeter*,
&c.

SEVERAL Gentlemen of great Worth and Character, interposed on behalf of the Government to put a Stop to these Differences, in regard a Bill was then in *Parliament* for easing the *Dissenters*, of many Grievances, and to save the Credit of the Legislature, in so serving them ; to this End were convened the *London* Ministers of all Persuasions, and were they duly apprised by these Gentlemen of the Reason of their Meeting, the Gratitude they owed to the Government, and how much, at that Time, it concern'd them to shew by their peaceable Conduct amongst one another, how well they deserved the Opinion the Publick then stood in possession of, concerning them : But no sooner were these People got together, duly impress'd with Resolutions and Sentiments of Pacification, but the natural Leven shewed it self in its genuine Ferment ; they forgot the Breach they came to heal, and went heartily together by the Ears, about their own *Orthodoxy*.

AND here I am bound to do Justice to a great Body of these Men : The grand Debate was, what Advices might be sent

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to their Brethren, to stop their Proceedings against one another on the account of Unsoundness in the Faith, or be a Measure of judging by in such Cases. Part were for having the Words of *Inspiration* only such a Standard, and Part for some Supplementary Articles contrived by Divines; the former I shall therefore hereafter consider as Christians, Protestants, and Friends to the present Government; and the latter only as *Papists* in disguise, Persecutors, and dangerous Enemies to that Freedom, which is the distinguishing Glory of the *British* Constitution.

THE former, as their Reasons for not Subscribing any humane Forms in Substance, gave, 1. Because it was out of their Instructions for meeting together, and would be a Breach thereof. 2. Because it was insisted upon at that Time, meerly to set aside the Business they came about. 3. Because there was no sufficient Reason given for Subscribing. 4. Because they had no Reason to think that a Declaration in other Words than those of Scripture, would serve the Cause of Peace and Truth, but rather be the occasion of greater Confusions and Disorders. 5. Because the Subscription insisted upon, was beyond even what the Legislature

Legislature has required. 6. Because it was not fit to pay such an unwarrantable Regard to the *Assemblies Catechism*. 7. Because it inverts the great Rule of deciding Controversies amongst Protestants ; making the Explications and Words of Men to determine the Sense of Scripture, instead of making the Scripture to determine how far the Words of Men are to be regarded. 8. Because it has the Nature of Imposition. 9. Because it gives up christian Liberty. 10. Because it would occasion Reflections, and be a needless Mark of Distinction. 11. Because it would reflect upon those who had always declared against such Things. And 12. Because the Enemies of Protestant *Dissenters*, approved and encouraged such Proceedings. And lastly, Because if this Humour was complied with, they could not tell where it would stop. And in a *Postscript* it was further urged, That such Subscription to Articles of humane Contrivance, would be treating the Laws of God with less Respect than is paid to those of our Country.

WHAT the *latter* gave in Justification of themselves, we shall presently come to consider.

BESIDES these Accounts, by the two contending Bodies, many Volunteers

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have engaged on both Sides from the Press. The Zealots began first to vent themselves in the common *News-Papers*; but the worst, and most disreputable only of those *Conveyances*, would gratify the Humour, such as the *White-Hall Evening-Post*, *Mist's Journal*, and the *Flying-Post*.

THE first Pamphlet of any Consideration, was *An Account of those Proceedings, in a Letter to the Reverend Dr. Gale*: This was wrote with some Spirit and Warmth on the Side of Protestantism, and the Bible, but went too far into particular Reflections to be publickly justified in so doing, To it is a *Post-script*, severely inveighing against the Falsifications and Baseness of an Account of this Affair, given a few Days before in the *Flying-Post*.

THE *Flying-Post* Account was soon after Vindicated in a Pamphlet called, *The Noble Stand, &c.* which was as vile an Imposition upon the Publick, as the Account it appeared to Vindicate. The Title of it carried an Air of defending a Reliance upon the Words of *Revelation* only, but the Body of the Work was quite opposite; a known Trick amongst the Hirelings of the Press, and the Wits of *Grub-Street*, but was altogether

gether new from a Minister of the Gospel, and a Stickler for *Orthodoxy* ; for this Man, it seems, is well-known, and publickly talked of, tho' to his Shame, on many other Accounts, as well as for this pious Imposition.

ON the back of this, pours out a Flood of Wrath, and Ill-Manners from Mr. *Bradbury*, in an *Answer to some Reproaches, &c.* This forward Talker will not be over-looked on any Occasion, and will always thrust himself into the Front of much abler Persons ; his pert Address, and unmeaning Fluency, has drawn upon him such Crowds of injudicious Flatterers, that the Man's Head seems to be quite turned, whereby on all Occasions he will be the foremost and loudest in the Company, tho' he has the least Sense and Learning to support such a Figure ; a multitude of Words pass with him for *Oratory*, a gingle of Sounds, for *Wit*, and a run of Scripture-Texts for *Orthodoxy* and Truth. His Arguments in this, is not worth looking after, because he never had any, having never been accustomed to fix any *Idea's* to the Words he makes use of : But his Treatment of a Person every Way Valuable, both in publick and private Life, and of a Character dear to all who are for Sincerity

in Religion, and the Liberties of a reasonable Being, must render this Trifler hereafter, the Abhorrence, as well as Scorn of all good Men.

TO a Third *Edition* of the *Account*, to which this was intended an *Answer*, was added a short Letter to Mr. *Bradbury*, treating him with a very just Neglect, and after that came out an *Answer* to him, by a *Lay-man* which did him more Regard than he deserved, because it took Pains to expose the Emptiness of his Pretensions.

MANY other Things are published relating to this Dispute, wherein there is nothing worth particular Remark, only so far as they relate to the Argument which I shall with the utmost Impartiality draw up on both Sides.

For the *Scripture Standard* only of *Faith* and *Orthodoxy*, that Side supports themselves with all that has been ever said in Vindication of the *Reformation*, professing themselves to act on no other Principles, but what at first rescued their Fore-Fathers from the *spiritual Slavery* of the *Romish Church*; and as they look upon likewise any *Innovations* therein, by any human Authority whatsoever, a pulling down that Security, on which both the religious and civil Liberties of this Government depends.

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FOR *Articles, Creeds, and Forms of humane Contrivance*, it is chiefly urged, that *Hereticks*, in all Ages, have found means to shelter themselves under Scripture Expressions, making use of the Terms thereof in forced Constructions, and thereby prevaricating with their own Consciences, and Mankind; That it is the Duty of every one to give an account of the Hope that is in him, when ever called upon so to do. That what has been now required, is only a subscription to such *Articles* as have been owned by every legally qualified Preacher, and in the *Catechisms* which they have been taught, and now teach to others. That a Refusal to Subscribe them now, is a Crime of the same Nature as *Perjury* in the Government, in taking Oaths to what is not obeyed; and to throw off the Charge of *Arianism*.

TO the first of these it may be observed, that no Man, or Society of Men, has a Power to erect themselves into a Judicature, in Matters concerning Conscience only, and the Terms of acceptance with almighty God. It is the Province of Omniscience only, to be the *Searcher of Hearts*; and it is no less than a blasphemous Arrogance, for any Man to lay claim to such a Power; if

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a Creature therefore thus affronts his Maker, thus prevaricates with Mankind, and plays Double under such Refuge, his Punishment is ascertained, by a superiour Authority than any on Earth; and tho' he may deceive Man, who, in Charity, is bound to believe in expresse Declarations, he cannot deceive God, nor practice such Frauds with Impunity. Man also has no more Capacity, than he has Power for such an Inquisition; and he that can deceive and prevaricate in Scripture-Terms, can, undoubtedly, do the same with humane Forms, if they can be bound upon him; so that it is the greatest Folly imaginable, to pretend to any Contrivance to prevent such Hypocrisy; as much as it is the highest Wickedness to attempt, in order thereunto, any Alteration in the Words of Inspiration, by which God has vouchsafed to discover Himself to us. If these *Scripture-Menders*, these *Faith-Botchers*, would therefore but relax enough in their Heat of Orthodoxy, to consider Things as they really are in themselves, they would find it as ridiculous a Talk to erect a better Creterion for Sincerity than God has allowed us, as it is impious to add to the Words of the Holy-Ghost in Matters of Revelation, in which

which our Faith gives us the Distinctions and Privileges of *Christians*.

IT is further allowed to be a Duty binding on all Persons who are desirous to be accounted *Christians*, and to have Communion as such, to give an Account of the Grounds of their Faith in that Revelation; but after this is done, and a Person lives in Conformity to such a Belief, I know not of any Power to call upon such a one for a *Re-Confession*, especially upon mere Jealousy and Caprice. There would soon be an End of all Government, Discipline, and Order, if such a Liberty was indulged; and there would be fine shifting and Confusion upon every new Muster of the Faithful, before their respective Assemblies, and the *Creed-Roll* must be altered upon every new Impulse of Orthodoxy, until Mankind arrive at Perfection and absolute Infallibility. These holy Jealousies, it is to be feared, flourish most in a very bad Soil; they are very remote from a sincere Mind, and can be only the Produce of a Heart well accustomed to, and practised in, Deceit and Collusion; which is so obvious a Reflection to every thinking Person, that it is strange these *Conscience-Binders*, for their own Credit, if they thought at all, would
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give such just Suspensions of their Insincerity; for the greatest Proficients in Guile, are always the most fearful of being Deceived, and it is but reasonable they should be so, because he that is not honest himself, has a continual Allarm within, of the danger of being caught with the Snares he has laid for others.

THAT the first Article of the *Church of England* is, what all Ministers qualified by Law, have Subscribed to, is also granted; but is it not amazing, that these Men should therefore, upon every Humour, call for a Re-Subscription of the same? They have complained, in the most moving Terms, of the Hardships, and Unreasonableness of such Impositions and Tests upon themselves; and yet now, to serve a Turn, or gratify a very ill Temper, are they mad to put the same Hardships upon their Brethren; and although they have been ashamed to avow this in their printed Accounts, yet am I certainly informed, That it has been threatned amongst them, to put that Act of Parliament, obliging hereunto, in Force, against all such who, at the late Meetings, should refuse to *Stand* as they would have them, and should be found to have neglected this Demand of the Legislature. I will not make any further

further Remark upon this particular Instance of Conduct, than that it is a palpable Demonstration of a wicked Spirit, and discovers a Disposition as foreign to all Regards of Religion and Conscience, as it is remote from that Gratitude which a kind indulgent Government has required at their Hands. Shall the King, shall both Houses of Parliament, condescend to their Importunities, and Prayers for Toleration, and they not tolerate one another? Clear this up to the World, ye furious, ye inhumane *Faith-Drivers*, or renounce at once your Allegiance to God and your Country, by a voluntary Exile amongst *Savages* and *Barbarians*.

IT is hard not to let ones Resentments run to excess at such a flagitious Conduct; the Folly likewise, if not the Wickedness, was as great, in pretending, that a Refusal of such Subscription, is equivalent to an Act of Perjury in the State, and comparing it with taking the Oaths to the King, and afterwards rebelling against him; but to serve a Turn at this Pinch, perhaps these Men will contend, that every Refusal of taking the Oaths to the Government, by whomsoever capriciously called upon so to do, is an Act of Rebellion, for without

such a Supposition, there can never be made a Parallel in this Case; but as this is not allowed in the State, nor in any temporal Concerns, I know not why *Volunteers* or *Zealots* in Religion should, at pleasure, erect themselves into a *Bench of Orthodoxy*, and call upon others to renew their Subscriptions, Declarations, Confessions, or any other explicate Testimonies of Belief, whenever they please to be in a Humour so to do. There is this wide and very considerable Difference likewise between the Motives upon which these Tests are required by the State; and by these *New Creed-Coiners*.

THE Welfare of the Nation makes it necessary to keep out from amongst us too great a Mixture of the popish Religion; these Tests are therefore to secure against an Encrease of Papists; and the Oaths of Allegiance are wisely renewed as often as the Government has reason to suspect any dangerous Attempts from that Quarter, that the Magistrate might have a due watch over such who refuse. But these Men have no such Pretensions, to justify their late Proceedings in *religious Test-making*; Their Impositions have no Foundation, but in Whimsy, Ignorance, and a Narrowness of Principle,

ple, and which, if indulged, would hardly leave any two Persons together in Society, either as Men, or as Christians.

THE last and most popular Pretence for this *Conduct*, is to throw off the Charge of *Arianism*. The *High-Church*, it seems, has thought fit to dress up a Bug-Bear under this Cover, because at certain Times, what is signified under this Name, has had the Advantage of being pronounced *heretical, damnable, &c.* And this Machine have they play'd with great Success against their Enemies the *Whigs*, and the *Dissenters*, as they have deemed *them* also in the like Denomination; and this, forsooth, is thought a sufficient Reason, to break the Peace and Union of Christians, and weaken the Interest of the Nation. These *Dissenters* need not to have been at the Trouble and Expence of this Compliment to *High-Church*, because I have shewed in the former Part of their *Conduct*, wherein, in many Instances, they ought to shake Hands, besides their Agreement in that particular Point of Doctrine which is affected under this Name.

BUT it is too manifest that neither a Love of Truth, nor the Imputation of a reputed *Heresy*, had any Influence in this Affair: The *Creed-Subscribers* have

joined indeed with *High Church* in fastening this Odium upon their Brethren, only because they are in an Interest of Liberty, both in ecclesiastical and civil Government, in opposition to that Slavery which *High-Church* has so long contended for; and may it to the Honour of these *Orthodox* Believers, be ever remembred how fondly and openly they have entred into *Concert* and *League* with the Enemies of our Religion and Government, to brand with Reproach those who are known the stanch Friends to it upon Principle. But with what Shame and Confusion ought they to be covered, when it is told them, that in this holy Craft, they know themselves to be Deceivers? And that the persons whom they have forwarded this Clamour upon, no ways deserved that Distinction, but refused their Subscription on Reasons no ways affected by their Belief in these Doctrines. How far the Zeal of four Ministers of some Note, in lately Printing upon this disputed Subject, has been influenced likewise by a conscientious Concern for *Truth*, or a spiteful Temper towards their Brethren, who have opposed their pious Impositions, I leave to those who have leisure to read their several Performances.

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THE growing Friendships between these *Creed-Subscribers*, and *High-Church*, is remarkably obvious to all Men; and it will be no wonder, if in a little Time, even the old Rancour between *Mist* and the *Flying-Post*, be lost in their joint Endeavours for the same Interest. The Power of the Priest, and Independency of the Church, are the favourite Topics of both these *orthodox Writers*, and are to be supported by the same Engines, viz, *Creeds, Uniformity, Church-Censures, Excommunications, &c.*

THE Principles of Liberty propagated by the Bishop of *Bangor*, and under which the *Dissenters* in general, took Refuge, when apprehensive of foreign Danger; are now openly renounced by the *Zealots*. Their own Turn is served by them, and now they disclaim them in order to put in Practice their slavish Schemes. The Bishop too with them, is now an *Arian*, an *Arminian*, or any thing that is accounted Reproachful: He is a good Patriot, but a bad Divine; and *right* in the State, but *unsound* in the Faith; such pitiful, invidious Distinctions have these Wretches resort to! The late Bill, likewise, for *Strengthening the Protestant Religion*, is grown cold upon their Hands, as it has laid open a Door

Door for encouraging *Hypocrisy* ; for such do they call the charitable Communion of Christians with each other, who agree in *Essentials*, and differ only in the *Externals of Worship*, and *Discipline*.

THEY are, in short, satisfied with no Posture of Affairs that lays any Restraint upon their spiritual Pride and Ambition ; and they are as rightly turned for a *religious Tyranny* as was ever any *Pontiff at Rome*, or any of the *Priesthood* in that Church.

BUT here a necessary Justice calls for due Acknowledgment to those *Protestant Dissenters* who have opposed this holy Bondage, and have truly made a *Noble Stand* in the Cause of Liberty. These have discovered a full Sense of those Principles, which will always be a Security against Usurpation, and Slavery of any kind. They have acted in this Affair upon the real Motives on which the grand Reformation was conducted ; and in every Respect have shewn themselves *Englishmen* and *Protestants*. And I must heartily Wish my Country Joy upon the addition of so many to her nearest Interests ; and the Government, in particular, for the happy Fruits of a generous Indulgence, and Confidence : Such Principles cannot but contribute to
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the publick Advantage, as they make Persons better Christians, and better Neighbours, and thereby do a common Service both to the *Church* and *Nation*. Let the Enemies of *those* froth out their Malice in all the Terms of Reproach they can invent, as long as their own Consciences, and the Suffrage of all good Men, will be on their Side: But by the way, *Arianism* does not seem full enough of Rancour and Slander, to content them long; so that I Prophecy, that in a little Time they will come to *Atheism*, because that's commonly the last Resort, and parting Blow of an *orthodox* Scold.

In the last Place comes before us a Discourse of the Reverend Mr. *Cumming*, Minister of the *Scots Church* in *London*. This Gentleman, it seems, was one of the warmest in the fore-mention'd Debates for *new Standards of Orthodoxy*, and *humane Tests of Faith*; and since, for want of full Vent there, he has published himself out from the *Pulpit* and *Prefs*. But notwithstanding the great Zeal of this Gentleman in Projects that ever have, and ever will be attended with Distraction, Confusion, and personal Hatred, he shews more Learning,
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and good Sense, than all his Fellow-Labourers besides put together; tho' by the Discourse before us, I am of Opinion, that down-right *Popery* will be found upon him; such unforeseen Lengths does *Passion*, and a warm *Temper* frequently carry good Men into.

THIS Gentleman asserts, That *PLAIN SCRIPTURE CONSEQUENCES* are to be regarded as *MATTERS OF REVELATION*. This comes not in the Order of his Discourse to be insisted on, till the 29th Page, and there chiefly in the *marginal Reference*, where it is brought as an *Objection*, That *Scripture-Consequences* are, &c. only to those who see them. Whereupon one would think should follow a Solution of this Difficulty; but instead of that, we have nothing else but a short Turn upon the *Jesuits*, and *Socinians*, and also the *Arians*, *Sadduces*, and some other People that had said Things Mr. Cumming did not like, tho' no more to the Purpose in this Case, than a *Muster-Roll*, only as they give occasion of saying something afterwards of *Unbelief*. Thence roundly this Gentleman comes in upon us again, with, *The Question is not what a Man sees, or does not see, but what he ought to see, what he might see, if his Mind*

Mind were not inlaid with Prejudice, or Passion, and he humbly resigned his Understanding unto God.

NOW I would fain ask any Person, what we are taught by all this, touching the Point under Examination? If any *plain scripture Consequences* are to be made equivalent to the Authority of Revelation, that are no way affected by Persons who draw from thence Absurdities, and pervert the Meaning of the sacred Text; these *Consequences* should have been told us, or where they are to be had, or who are the Makers of them; but this it seems is to be come-by, like the Secrets in *Alchymy*, and the *Philosopher's Stone*, not by Dint of *humane Understanding*, but by a great deal of Devotion, by resigning the Understanding to God, and seeing what we ought to see.

AND thus we shall always find it with People who maintain Notions that they either do not see through, or dare not be express in. If this Gentleman's general Assertion was true, and he understood what he meant by it, he would have been plain upon what are these *Consequences* on which this great Stress is to be laid, or where they are to be had; but he had either no Meaning

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when he spoke it, or found it capable of being only proved at *Rome*.

THAT I may make good this heavy Charge against a *Protestant Minister* of the Gospel, to even the meanest Apprehension, who is not prejudiced; let me take Notice, that it is of the Essence of *Popery*, that it claims a Power of determining Articles of Faith, and making humane Forms, or Prescriptions, under the Pretence of a *Church-Authority*, to be equal, if not superior to the *inspired Writings*, and this on a Pretence, of an *Infallibility lodged in the Church, or the Head thereof*, so to do. This Principle well established, and *the Understanding*, in the Language of the Church, *given up to God*, very naturally received the Decorations of *Pomp, Processions, Saints, Images, Indulgences, Absolutions, Censures, Deprivations, Excommunications, Fines, Prisons, Tortures, &c.* from the Wit and Craft of the Priesthood: This is the Religion of *Rome*, on Mr. *Cumming's* Foundation; but the intollerable Oppressions, and ridiculous Consequences, at last from hence maintained, opened the Eyes of some parts of the World: *Misery and Pain* first roused them from their Lethargy; and to a Sense of Feeling, they first owned the recovery of their

their Understanding. As soon as a Man was come to himself, he perceived that he was accountable to God for himself; that God had vouchsafed a *Revelation* of his Will so far as was necessary to guide every one to the Means of Salvation; that the Priest might teach him, but could not believe for him, or compel his Assent in Matters of Faith, but by the Evidence of which he must judge himself. And thus came this grand Imposture of *Faith-making*, and *Believing for Self and Company*, to be protested against by the honest and deserving Part of Mankind; thus was brought about the *Grand Reformation*, and the *Doctrine* now revived by Mr. Cumming, branded for *Imposture*, and *spiritual Tyranny*.

I cannot but again take Notice of this *giving up the Understanding to God*. The Expression it is true, bears such a serious, pious Aspect, that it seems Wickedness to laugh at it; yet it looks very convertible *with believing in the Parson*; the Capacities, and Powers of my Mind, whereby I judge of all Things for my self, are always to be look'd upon as the *Gift of God*, and used with the most awful Regard in Matters of eternal Concern; but *giving it up to God*, is *hard*.

to understand, unless it means laying it aside, which seems a strange Way of being Religious, and fit only for the *Laity*; because if the Parson does so too, the *Blind will certainly lead the Blind*. This holy *Bribe*, then, I cannot but look on as a Cast of the *Craft*, and justly calculated for such a State of the Church, as the *Pope* himself would be pleased to liken to a *Shepherd and his Flock*.

BUT to return to the *plain Scripture Consequences* of Mr. *Cumming*, what other Use has he to make of them than what *Rome* has done before? Without some Power, some Coercion, some holy Injunction to bind these *Consequences* upon People, this Liberty can signify nothing. I can grant it to this Gentleman, that he has a Power of making *Scripture Consequences*, but unless others happen to make the same *Consequences*, by the Act of their own Understandings, they are of no use but to himself, unless he goes wholly upon the *Popish Scheme*, which I believe he will not avowedly do. If Twenty likewise agree in the same *Consequence*, they cannot bring one more into it, unless by an Act of his Understanding he also has his Assent determined thereunto; and if but One in Ten Thousand remained unconvinced

convinced, the Assent of the other has nothing to do with him, until his Understanding can receive it on such Conviction, as would prevail with him as much as if no one in the World before, was of that Opinion. But this is christian Liberty; this is being Reasonable in Religion, and this is Protestantism. If therefore this Reverend Person means by *Scripture Consequences*, such as every Christian does and must make for himself; he has asserted what no one denies; for no one reads the Scriptures with Understanding, but has some Idea's awakened by the Expressions therein; and the Propositions formed by their Means, are to that Person the Revelation it self; and this is incommunicable to another, but by exciting the same Idea's, and forming the same Deductions in his Mind: Under this Restriction, therefore, this great Assertion was needless; but if a *Scripture-Consequence* of One Person's making, or of a Thousands, or of any Number or Majority whatsoever, is to be regarded as *Matter of Revelation*, to any one that does not upon the exercise of his Understanding, make that Consequence himself, this is the very Principle and Essence of *Pope-ry*. I must therefore repeat it, That if this

this Gentleman means no more, than that every one, upon reading the Scripture, does draw Consequences from thence equivalent to *Revelation*, this is a needless Declaration of his Mind, because all *Protestants* do it; but if he intends that any such *Consequences* are to be regarded as *Matter of Revelation* to others, who do not, or cannot see them, he supports and maintains the very Foundations of *Popery*.

HOW shall we then reconcile these flaming Positions with that Religion and Moderation, the *Contenders* for Faith in other Views lay claim to; but by going on the side of Charity, and thinking that their intemperate Zeal has darkened their Understandings, and made them push at Random for some favorite Notions, without looking thoroughly into them. This Gentleman himself, p. 8. declares, That *the Faith he contends for, excludes all unwritten Traditions, all Precepts and Doctrines of Men, all Decrees of Councils, all Ecclesiastical Laws, all Canons, and Customs that are not contained in, and that cannot be proved by express Testimonies of Scripture*. I cannot reconcile these things, any more than I can the following. It is enough (page 5.) to strike a serious Christian with

with Horrour, to consider the present State of revealed Religion amongst us, and the Insolence which some dare to treat the most tremendous Mysteries! For a revealed Mystery, is just as intelligible, and as good Sense, as making Scripture Consequence, that is not plain, a plain Scripture Consequence; and something that is unintelligible, a Rule of Faith: A Consequence that is plain, needs no Arguments to compel the Assent of those to whom it is plain, and no Power upon Earth can influence the Assent of those to whom it is not plain; and whatsoever is Revealed, ceases to be a Mystery to those to whom it is Revealed, and to those to whom it is not Revealed, it is yet a Mystery; but to be Revealed and a Mystery too, is an Absurdity; and can be of no Service but to the Art of Puzling, and those who find an account in making Fools a Property, and sinking reasonable Beings into Asses, only for the sake of riding them.

SO that do what we can with this Intricacy, there is no getting out of it, but by going back to Rome; for there it is with some Consistency, that the Scriptures may be charged with Insufficiency, because the same Spirit which dictated them, still rests with the Church to explain

plain them ; and there the Lalty may be tied down to Stupidity, because the Clergy have a Power to lead, or drive, or do what they will with them ; but amongst *Protestants*, amongst reasonable Beings, and free Agents, for a Person to make Articles of Faith, and draw Scripture *Consequences* for others, is a glaring Contradiction, and capable of coming only from a Person blind with Zeal, or a much worse Motive. Such a Subject as this, would make a fine Morfel for such a writer as *the Apologist for Parson Alberoni* ; but how much soever it may deserve his Satyr, I am unwilling the Gentlemen of this Cast should yet be shock't with his Profanity ; but if they go on after this Manner they have began, they may thank themselves, perhaps, for much worse Consequences, than being the Entertainment of *Lampoon*, and the Mirth of *Scoffers*.

WHENCE, in the Name of all Goodness, can this *Itch of Faith-making* come from ? A thousand Things, perhaps, one might guess at, but I question whether any would look so probable, as the *Interest* and *Ambition* of the Clergy, and our *spiritual Teachers*. So fatal has the *Reformation*, and *Protestantism* been to those Regards, that the Minister

Minister has left him nothing to do; but to Preach well, and Live well; that is, to instruct, and improve the Understanding in Doctrines and Matters of Speculation, and lead and win us to Vertue, by the Example of *his own Life*. They are therefore shrewdly to be suspected, not only defective in those Duties, but to have some unjustifiable Views, who slacken in those main Points of their Office, and are for making an *Arcanum* of Religion, and for treating the *Laity*, as an *Empirick* does his *Patients*. If our *Faith* is to be made by the *Clergy*, their Work is cut mighty short; because this of course makes our Understandings useless, and prevents all the Trouble of Study and Instruction, besides the Power that on many Accounts would hereby soon devolve into their Hands, not to say any thing of the *Gain* that might be made of this *Godliness*.

THESE Ministers, therefore, who have got into the Vein of *Creed making*, and Proving their *Orthodoxy* by humane Forms, must make but an odd Figure to those who truly consider what it is to be a Christian upon the *Protestant Scheme*; and what Airs soever they may give themselves, of *contending for the Faith*

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once delivered to the Saints, while they drive on in this Humour of Reviling, Censuring, and Damning, as far as is in their Power, the Brethren, who think not just as they do, they will stand upon Record as a *Spiritual Inquisition*; and no way inferior to those in the *romish Countries*, for all that is detestable to a free Being, but in their not having so much Power.

IN the former Part of this *Conduct*, I took Notice of the first Fruits of this Zeal, and Flame of *Orthodoxy*, in the unchristian and inhumane Treatment of the Reverend Mr. *Pierce* at *Exeter*; who is a real Ornament to the Office of a Minister, by his Learning, Piety, and universal Charity; and here we may see what that Gentleman has by such Usage been forced publickly to say of himself, and his Brethren upon this Affair.

“ Is not this down-right persecution?
 “ Is not here an unjust depriving men of
 “ their right and property, for the sake
 “ of a supposed error in their judgment?
 “ And if that is not, what can be per-
 “ secution? Have not the Dissenters, who
 “ have acted in this manner, or abetted
 “ those that have, justified the oppressi-
 “ ons

“ ons they used to complain of in their
 “ adversaries? Why may not they as
 “ well oppress to secure *Episcopacy*,
 “ which they pretend to be absolutely
 “ necessary, as the Dissenters do the
 “ same for the sake of any thing they
 “ pretend to be a necessary and impor-
 “ tant truth? With what face can they
 “ blame them for imposing tests upon
 “ ministers, when they practice the
 “ same thing themselves? or why should
 “ they charge them as setting up for
 “ infallibility, when they proceed in the
 “ same manner with them? I must own
 “ I am for absolute liberty in matters of
 “ religion, and against any man’s being
 “ persecuted for the sake of his religious
 “ principles, that do not affect the civil
 “ state. This I have over and over de-
 “ clar’d to the world; and I thought
 “ the Dissenters generally, a very few
 “ only excepted, had been of my mind.
 “ In the simplicity of my heart, I judg’d
 “ them to be as sincere in their concern
 “ for the only ground of our toleration,
 “ as I am myself; who had testify’d
 “ their liking of what I had written
 “ against persecution, in my *Vindication*
 “ *of the Dissenters* against Dr. Nichols,
 “ and my *Letter* to Dr. Snape. I am
 “ very

“ very sorry to find myself now con-
 “ vinced, I have been in a considerable
 “ mistake concerning them; tho’ I
 “ own, and bless God for it, there are
 “ a great many Dissenters, and especi-
 “ ally in *London*, who understand the
 “ foundations of their cause, and have
 “ shew’d themselves zealous for liberty.
 “ But as to the rest, I frankly now
 “ declare my judgment, that they have
 “ forever stopp’d the Mouths of all
 “ advocates for them and their cause,
 “ that will pretend to talk consistently;
 “ nor is it a possible thing for a Man
 “ of sense to defend them; and I pro-
 “ fess my self a Dissenter from all such
 “ Dissenters; and I long to see the
 “ time, which things seem working to,
 “ when the friends of liberty shall be
 “ form’d into one party, without any
 “ subdivision, being able to bear and
 “ join with one another, notwithstanding
 “ their different sentiments about
 “ abstruse matters, or modes of wor-
 “ ship.

HERE

HERE have we the Authority of this honest Man, who may reasonably be supposed as well to know the *Dissenters*, as any one, for distinguishing them into two Parties : On the one Side, *Christians, Protestants, and good Subjects* ; and on the other, *Inquisitors, Persecutors, and Enemies* to our *Liberties*.

THE most artful Engine these *Saints militant*, play against the Friends of Liberty, and *Non-Subscribers*, is the *Divinity of Jesus Christ*, and the Validity of his Redemption ; for they charge them with denying both these great Points ; and in very passionate Harangues to the Populace, talk of *Treachery, Ingratitude, being ashamed of their Saviour, denying the Lord that bought them*, and such like deceitful Colourings. They presumptuously intrude themselves into the Councils of the Almighty, and with an impious Confidence prescribe even the Conditions of Acceptance with God, of Attonement for Sin, and of Reconciliation, And thus comes the Merit of our *Saviour's Sufferings* in the Flesh, to be by these Men restrained to certain Qualifications of his Existence ; and they supply what the Scriptures demands of our Be-
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lief in him, with *Articles* and *Creeds* expressive of those Qualifications of a Redeemer, wherein the former was defective, and silent. Thus it comes about that a Declaration of Faith in Scripture-Terms, is not sufficient for *Communion* with these People, because they have taken it into their Heads to affirm, *That Sin is an Offence against an infinite Being; that nothing can be a sufficient Attone-ment for that, but an infinite Satisfaction; and therefore, that a Redeemer must be an infinite God.*

THUS the Terms of Salvation, or a saving Faith, is impiously ravished from the inspired Text, and planted in *Creeds* of these Men's making, as more expressive, full, and significant. Hence the Four *London* Ministers, before-mentioned, have joined their Forces, to overturn the Scripture Doctrine of a Redeemer, and substitute an *Invention* of their own, as a *necessary Condition of Salvation*. And hence all that come not into this Scheme, which is called *Orthodox*, are pronounced under the Sentence of *Damnation*; *that they have no reason to think that Christ will accept any Offering at their Hands; that they are not under a Capacity of receiving the Grace of God;*
and

and that they Deny the Lord that bought them.

WHAT will be the Issue of this Struggle, some are in Pain to think; but the Controversy is plain, to lye between *Protestantism* and *Popery*; and however shocking it may be at first, to think of finding the *latter* amongst *English protesting Dissenters*, yet *It* is plainly found upon them; whereby that it is hoped these Disputes will end in marking *such* out, to the same Resentments of the Publick, and all good Men, as *those* justly lye under, who are open in their Declarations for a *religious Bondage*.

F I N I S.

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